

THE

Theology
Band 1.

Modern Protestant:

OR, AN

ESSAY

To set up a

New CHURCH

AND A

New Religion.

—*Rudis indigestaque Moles,*
Quam dixere Chaos,— Ovid.

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THE
Modern Protestant :

ESSAY

TO THE

NEW CHURCH

AND



By

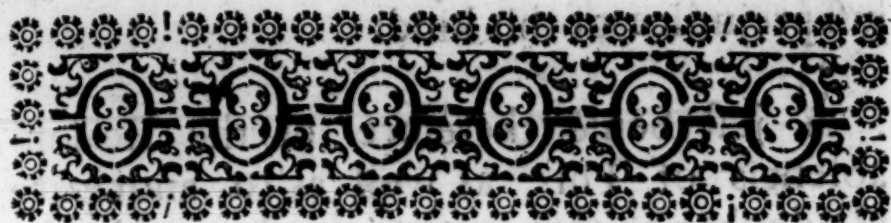
JOHN W. ...

Printed and Sold by the Bookellers ...

(Glasgow: 1840)



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into the World, as may at least take off all just prejudice of this kind.

A just Sense therefore of the Reasonableness of This, as well as to anticipate all doubts of this nature, leads me in the first place, so far to give an Account of my own Character and Abilities, which as from the Genius and Spirit that will appear in every Part of them, they will abundantly speak my Capacity this way: So from the Influence that must naturally arise therefrom, it may not be altogether unuseful to the forwarding, and further extending even the WORK it self.

Tho' it is very little of my Design, to entertain you with a long detail of my Genealogy: Yet as some considerable Marks of Distinction in Great and Extraordinary Personages, have been frequently fetch'd from the Blood and Stock they came of, it cannot be altogether improper to usher in the great and Important Design we are going to carry on, with some short Narrative this way.

When I consider the Spirit and Character of my Mother, it were I must own a considerable Advance, preremptorily to assert who was my Father; yet from some particular Turns and Dispositions which I find inseparable

inseparable from my Nature, I cannot but think He whom I found to cohabit with Her, during my Minority and stay with her, had at least a large Share in my Production.

As to his Character, tho' it was something extraordinary, yet it was very common, and well known in the Times he liv'd in: 'Twas a Compound of Preaching and Fighting; and tho' from the Correspondence he appears to have had with my Mother, it may be easily gather'd, He had some little intercourse with the Flesh; Yet was it no Hindrance to his more Publick, and better known Dealings with the Spirit. In his more particular Denomination He distinguish'd himself among those, who were said to be MEN ABOVE ORDINANCES: and so Fertile was his Conception in his way, that not a Month pass'd, without his advancing some new Scheme, either in Religion or Politicks. But as the tenderness of my Years, and the very early shifts I was forc'd to make in Life, soon snatch'd me from his Influence, and consequently the Advantage of his Documents, I am able to give very little Account, how far I may be the Inheritor of his Genius, in the particulars of his Invention; tho' thus much might be said to evince such a Thought, as that it is not unnatural. Leaving therefore the Spirit and Character of
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my SIRE to speak it self, in the more elaborate Histories that have fully delivered them to the World, that of my Own being only what we design'd to Preface the great undertaking we are engag'd in; consequently calls for our more immediate Regard.

When I was arriv'd to six Years of Age; the Revolutions in publick Affairs, and the fear of the Gallows having driven my Parents to seek their security in Places far Remote from that of my Nativity; not being at those Years portable to their necessitous and Fugitive Condition, I found my self committed to the Care of the Parish. Being us'd to hardship, the Parsimony of my Nurse, (under whose sole Jurisdiction and Government I was plac'd) gave me very little uneasiness at the Change of my Condition; nor was it indeed long, before the Desertion of my Parents prov'd in no small Degree the Advancement of my Fortune: Whether it was owing to some favourable Account my Parochial Providitress might give of her Charge, or some private Observation made of me, by the Lady her self, was the Cause of my so sudden and unexpected Promotion, I cannot recount; but six Months had not pass'd, before from the common Care of the Parish, I commenc'd the particular one of a noble and excellent Patron.

Patroness. As her first care was to give such a Change to my Cloaths, as might render me fitter than I was before, for the Appearance of her House : So her next was the Improvement of my Manners, by sending me to School : The early Advantages I made of this her favourable Influence, furnishing me out with the necessary Qualifications of Reading and Writing; and by that time I was Fourteen, these having added to them a competent Progress in the *Grammar*, the natural Aspiringness of my Genius, and activeness of my Temper, soon led me to exerting some of my Talents, and giving some promising Beginnings of what might be expected from me.

Tho' from the Nature and Tendency of my present Design, it will be easily gather'd, I have taken a dislike to every Thing I have yet found in the World, call'd Religion; and that from thence I consequently took up the GREAT PURPOSE of forming one, that was ENTIRELY NEW, and never yet heard of, different from them all: Yet as it has been frequently observ'd, that Nature has it's particular Antipathies, and bears a stronger bound and Animosity against some things more than others: So I cannot but observe in my own Temper, This has remarkably taken Place. The Church of *England* and her Clergy were ever, by I know not what sort of Biass in Nature,

Nature, Objects, of my most implacable Aversion; and therefore it was, that my first Efforts in the Capacity of Authorship, were levell'd against them. I shall not enter into the particulars of my many noble Atchievements this way; but I can, in the general, assure you, they were such as soon gain'd me the Notice, and in a very short time the Encouragement of all, who find either their Interest or Entertainments in these sort of Rencounters. The Talent I had herein, resulting from a Radicated hatred I had in my very Nature against Priests, and what I was very early Taught by my Father to call Priestcraft, as it shew'd it self in my very Infancy, considerably improv'd with my years which we are now to consider as more immediately engag'd in the more Publick and active Parts of my Life.

Having given you this succinct Account, both of my Naturals and Acquirements, I am now to inform you, I had left the Lady from whom I receiv'd the Letter, and push'd on by necessity, bad Cloaths, want of Credit, and such other common Incentives to the Powers of Invention, I turn'd all my Thoughts to the bettering such irksome Circumstances. You will easily gather in this Scene of my Life, the internal Cravings of my Stomach, and the angry Expostulations

tions of my Landlady for the Sheets which she often told me I foul'd, not a little forwarded my purposes of Action; and as I quickly observ'd (what was my natural Aversion) the PARSONS grow into a sort of fashionable Quality, and deem'd a part of modern Politeness, I readily concluded on exerting my Talent. The various shapes in which I appear'd this Way, would amount to the Bulk of a considerable Catalogue to descend to each particular; but as it was my promise at the first setting out, to give the judicious at least some evident Proofs of my being more than commonly qualify'd for the Work I have in hand, a short Account of some particulars cannot be thought ill to acquit the Obligation. In the Discharge of this Part, I shall have such an Eye to Chronology, as may give you some Idea of the several Steps I have made from my first Appearance to publick view; and tho' from the many different Names to which these my Performances have been apply'd, some may be tempted to think I Arrogate Honours to my self that do not belong to me: Yet when it is consider'd I was the great Spirit, and Genius that mov'd each of the particulars I shall mention the different Denominations under which we know them, are to be taken only for the Vehicles, or Conduits, by which I exhibited my self to the World.

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Taking then my Catalogue from the best of my Memory, I am first to inform you I appear'd under the Name of *Blount*; and bore in my Title the *Oracles of Reason*. This was quickly succeeded by what was call'd by me *Priestcraft*, and then my Name was *Hickeringill*; after this I was known under the Appellation of the *Rights of the Christian Church*; then in *A Letter concerning Enthusiasm*; next from an *Account of the growth of Deism*; next from *A Brief but clear Confutation of the Doctrine of the Trinity*; *Brief Notes on the Creed of Athanasius*; *Christianity not Mysterious*; *The unreasonableness of making, and Imposing Creeds*; and Lastly, from a New Gospel which I call'd *Nazareus*; and with this I finish my first Bundle.

But as these were such as were only read by the Men of Books; however they might speak my Genius & Capacity, they were consequently known by very few; and therefore the better to extend my Abilities to yet more publick and general Notice, I have lately chose to contract my Compositions in a yet more narrow compass, and by that means hand them to publick Observation, once or twice a Week in the Dress of *FREE-THINKERS, INDEPENDENT-WHIGGS, LONDON JOURNALS*, and such other Denominations

nations, as the Times, and my own Fancy should furnish me out with ; as their Nature and Spirit are very well known, I shall not give any further Accounts of them ; but as they were entirely undertaken by me to pave the way to the present Great Design I have in view, I thought it proper thus far to mention them ; And one other Remarkable concerning them I cannot omit, that the general Approbation they have found, and the Uses they have been put to, have been so far of Service to me, as not only to better my Cloaths, but by the Subscriptions, and other Methods, that have been taken for my Gratitude, have furnish'd out my Pocket a sufficient Security against Bailiffs ; and in some Degree provided for my Bottle and Wench.

After this Ample Account of my Genius and Qualifications, with the several Steps of my Progress, to the present Scene and Situation of my Life: It will not be amiss as a Mark of my SINCERITY, to deal plainly in the Matter, and at once to inform the World so far of the Negative Part of my Character, as to assure it, I AM NO CHRISTIAN: For tho' the Remarkable Animosity with which I have pursu'd the Church of *England* in particular, may lead the gentle Reader to think the

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whole

whole of my Resentment determin'd there-
to: Yet I cannot but think it properly in-
troductive to the Work I have in hand, fully
to declare my self equally an Enemy to the
Christian Religion in general; and that the
Inveteracy I have always, and in all Shapes
so remarkably shewn against it, with the see-
ming Correspondence and Harmony I have
of late cultivated with all its Enemies, espe-
cially of a PROTESTANT STAMP, is no other-
ways to be consider'd, than as the Former al-
ways appear'd to me the most formidable
and best concerted Branch thereof, and the
Ignorance and Perverseness of the other,
furnish'd me with proper Tools for the pul-
ling down the whole.

Tho' this full Declaration may be thought
very extraordinary, and going a length I
have never been observ'd to do before; yet
as SINCERITY in this Argument has of late
been so very much enforc'd, and indeed
made a Reason to justify every thing else;
and as it has been a just reproach of-
ten thrown in my Teeth, that while I was
evidently bending all my Studies and en-
deavours for the Destruction of Christianity,
I have yet skreen'd my self under its Name
and Profession; I thought my self oblig'd at
least in this my last and best performance,
to be open and plain; and since my deep
and

and elaborate searches of this nature have concluded me directly against, not only all other Religions that have yet appear'd in the World, but more especially what is call'd the CHRISTIAN RELIGION : I think it wou'd not consist with my Honour and Integrity to make so much as any Pretensions to that.

Thus having by this full Account of my Character and Genius, as I think, sufficiently anticipated all doubt of my Abilities ; I proceed now more immediately to the WORK I propose, which without any further Circumlocution, is plainly this, *viz. To make or form a new System of Religion, different from any the World has yet ever heard of, whether of Pagan, Turkish, Jewish, or Christian Extract* ; and that we may propose what we have to offer in the clearest View, it may not be improper to consider it, first, in its *negative*, and Secondly, in its *affirmative Parts*. By its *negative Parts*, I understand such peculiar particulars both in its *Nature* and *Oeconomy*, as will distinguish and render it different from every Thing of this kind, that has as yet been propos'd to the World ; and by its *affirmative*, such particular or rather general *Rules* and *Principles*, as shall be laid down for the Management of the whole. And first we are to consider it

it in its *negative Parts*; and this we shall do in these two, distinct Views, *viz.*

First, The Form or manner of its *Oeconomy* or Government. Secondly, in the Rules or Principles by which it is to be Governed.

And first of the Form &c.

And this I am to inform you in the first Place is to be entirely without PRIESTS; this tho' it may seem at first View a Scheme of Church Government entirely new, and what was before never yet heard of, yet I must own I took the first hint of it in my Thoughts, from that illustrious and well known Monarch of IMMORTAL and GLORIOUS MEMORY, JEROBOAM, the Son of NEBAT. It is true he thought fit to retain the Name; but as by the Choice he made, he effectually destroy'd the Thing, *viz.* a PRIESTHOOD, I have thought my self oblig'd to pay this regard to his Memory, not but I must and have before * insisted in my own particular, that the Pretences of these PRIESTS to teaching and governing in matters of Religion, is of late and modern Institution, *The Antients being taught by Philosophers and not by Priests*; and that 'tis from this their late Obtrusion

* vid. Independent Whig.

into the Office of Teaching, that all the free and generous Methods of thinking, which under their Tuition so much obtain'd, have been so cramp'd and abridg'd. The Monopoly the PRIESTS have made, by I must own a long Prescription of every Thing which we call teaching or Instruction in what is call'd Religion, will I readily apprehend, give us some trouble to rid them out of all management in our present Design ; and I must own of late, some of them have not been unuseful towards the forwarding what is our present Intention to finish. But as I have so very often declar'd my self in this particular, that I am resolv'd not to retain so much as even the Name of a PRIEST in this my new System ; and tho' it may be admitted there are some of them that might, and have been useful Instruments to my present purpose : Yet tho' it may be found easy enough to make them part with what they call their RELIGION and CHRISTIANITY : Yet they will never be so easily prevail'd on to part with their REVENUES. How great they are, and consequently what a considerable Charge might be sav'd to the publick, by a total Expulsion of them out of Society, and substituting a set of jolly Fellows, who (as I have before observ'd in this

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Argument in the Case of the * Quakers) will do their Business as WELL, and BETTER for NOTHING ; the many fat Benefices there are at this Day to be found in *England*, will readily suggest; and therefore as the good of the whole is by all the reasonable Laws of Society to take Place, notwithstanding some particular inconveniencies that may attend it : I promise my self all my intelligent Readers will conclude with me, That nothing less than a total Expulsion of the very Name, as well as Thing out of our Society, will render our System of Government and Religion, compleat and perfect.

I am readily aware upon this so ample Declaration of my purpose, I shall have my DOUBLE CHINN'D Antagonists immediately in an uproar; the Bell will be instantly Rung, and the noble Doctors down to the DRAY-HORSES THEIR CURATES † will take the Alarm : Such a formidable Attempt not only upon TITHE PIG, but *Tithes* themselves will fill the PULPIT every where with Noise, and outcry; to have our old so often inculcated System at once exploded

* *Vide* Independent Whig.
roni, and Independent Whig.

† Letter to Parson *Albe-*

and cast off, and our whole Train of constitutive Regents, PROPHETS, APOSTLES, EVANGELISTS, PASTORS, TEACHERS, &c. no longer thought on or regarded, will in the Nature of the Thing, and therefore it must be expected by us, fill our Ears with the din, as far as their Clamour and Influence can extend, of nothing but BLASPHEMY, ATHEISM, SACRILEGE, INFIDELITY, and what not; and it may not improbably happen, that many of the MOBB and unthinking Herd may joyn in the Cry; but as the NATURE and GLORY of the Action it self has, and will be sufficiently made appear, and the immediate Interest that flows to all the worthy undertakers so readily, is evident; we cannot but persuade our selves our design will be sufficiently supported with Strength and Numbers to prevail, notwithstanding the Opposition it must at first expect to find.

You see I have not represented our Great and noble UNDERTAKING so entirely different from all others of that kind, as to be without its Difficulties; but as every thing, that can be thought of this way, can only flow from the PARSONS, and the MOBB, I cannot but think we need have very little Apprehensions about them. As to what can be said by the first, is very little to be minded, and tho' the last, should they

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prove rusty, may be something formidable: Yet I cannot but promise my self, they being immediately quitted from the Exaction of Tithes, will make them run very easily into our Scheme.

However, I have discharg'd my self with the utmost *Sincerity*, in mentioning thus much to you, and if any are of such dastardly Spirits, to be frighted with such petty Incumbrances as these, they are at least, very unfit to engage in our first Settings out, and consequently must hereafter be content with a less Share of the Advantages that will result therefrom.

Shou'd there be any so weak, as to be mov'd with the empty Thundrings of the PRIESTS, and start at the Sound of SACRILEGE and such other full mouth'd Vociferations, * I can only refer such to my former elaborate Proof; that there *Neither is nor can be any such Thing in Nature*; and till they are fully persuaded of the Force and Cogency of my Reasoning this way, I must be so free to tell them they are not yet qualify'd to be Members of the NEW CHURCH, and NEW RELIGION here propos'd and recommended to the World.

* See *London Journal* on Sacrilege.

Tho' this my Condescension in thus anticipating Objections and Remora's, may seem too much to recede from the Spirit and Dignity of the Character with which I first enter'd on this Project ; yet as it has been always my Complaint of the Prejudice of Education, and how apt it is to break in upon and cramp every Great and generous Freedom of thought ; I have therefore to prevent Surprise if it should happen, ventur'd thus lightly to hint to you what will probably be suggested of that kind.

But not to dwell longer on the dark side of our Project, having sufficiently already to the intelligent, presented the Reasons of the Necessity and Advantages of excluding the Name of a PRIESTHOOD out of the New Church and Religion we are going to set up : Our Thoughts will naturally lead us in the next Place to enquire who we are to have in their stead. But as what we are now more immediately engag'd in, is to lay before you only the negative Parts of our Design, the order of our discourse requires us to refer that to a more proper Occasion, and pursue yet such further Remarkables of this Sort as must, and ought to fall under our Notice ; and therefore in the second Place we are to observe to you,

that as there is to be no such Thing as PRIESTS in the Church or Religion propos'd, neither shall there be any such Thing as PRIESTCRAFT.

The Reason of this will readily appear, when it is considered, that the very End propos'd by thus totally excluding the CRAFTSMEN, is the main and most effectual way to get rid of the CRAFT it self: And indeed both the CRAFT and the CRAFTSMEN, are so mutually knit and interwoven together, that 'twill be impossible to part them; and therefore the same Reason and Necessity, that obliges us to the entire extirpation and expulsion of the one, equally extends to the abollition of the other; and we must not expect either Ease or Settlement in the Scheme we propose, till both are destroy'd. All therefore we are to consider in the present Case is, *what the Craft is*, and how we may most effectually abolish and destroy it? The one being necessary, to point out to our worthy Members the Objects they are to engage against, and the other, to shew them the Reward of their Conquests. What the Craft is? I cannot but think, I ought fully to explain, and lay before you, as highly requisite to be particularly understood; and therefore, as you may be possibly deceiv'd, and run
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into it, by the various Shapes and Dresses in which it appears in the World, while your Intention is to oppose and destroy it: I shall place it in so general, and extensive a View, as will render you able to know it, and consequently oppose it, in whatever Shape you find it.

By PRIESTCRAFT then you are to understand every Pretence to such a thing as a DIVINE REVELATION, denominate it how you will. As for Instance, take it in the Account of the Jews, and their PRIESTS, and you will find it call'd the LAW, deliver'd by *Moses* and the Prophets; from the Christians, and they add to this, what they call their GOSPEL: Go to the Turks, and they call it their ALCORAN; The Pagans, and they call it their DREAMS and VISIONS; but whatever Pretences of this kind present themselves to you, whether written or unwritten, as it must be the great, and indeed only necessary Article of your CREED, to believe them to be all Sham and Imposture, so you are to push your utmost Force against them, and banish them out of the World wherever you come.

There being nothing more requisite to any new Building, than the laying a good
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and firm Foundation, and consequently nothing more necessary to our present Undertaking than to fix, and settle its great and FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE: I have taken the more Pains to be very particular and plain, in that the whole of what we have to offer depends so much thereon. You are therefore not only to consider, but well to remark and remember, that the Exclusion of every such Thing as PRIESTS and PRIESTCRAFT, or what they call Divine Revelation, however denominated, are to be esteem'd and adjudg'd, not barely as only Negative Parts of our present System, but necessary and constitutive Requisites, without the utter abolition and extinction of which, it cannot possibly subsist; and therefore they are to be oppos'd and exploded with Might and Main, as Contradictions in Nature, and what can by no means live together.

After this necessary Preliminary, it may not be improper to proceed to the positive Parts of our Scheme; for it may be remember'd as we promis'd to consider it in its negative Parts, which we have stated to be, its being without *Priest* and *Priestcraft*, or as we then express'd our selves, the *Form* or *Manner* of its GOVERNMENT, and the *Rules* and *Principles* by which it is to

to be GOVERNED: So likewise we engag'd equally to present such Particular, or rather General RULES and PRINCIPLES, as are proper for the Management of the whole.

The prosecution of this, will abundantly distinguish what we are engag'd in, from any Thing that has yet pass'd before it of this Nature; what has been done either by our own or other worthy Hands in this Way, being mostly calculated to the Destruction of what was already in being, rather than for the setting up any Thing New in its stead. But as it was our profess'd Design at first setting out, to go farther than any who have yet gone before us, so we mean now not to be worse than our Word; and therefore we shall propose what we have to offer of this kind, under these two distinct Views.

First, With regard to RELIGION, and,
Secondly, POLITICKS.

There being nothing in which we are engag'd in publick Life, but what in a great Measure comes under one of, these two Heads, I have the rather chose to mention them, to render our WORK not only as useful, but as extensive as might be; and first then I am to lay before you such a

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GENERAL PRINCIPLE in RELIGION as may be properly fitted for you to deport your self in regard thereto.

And now for your Encouragement, I cannot but take this Opportunity to assure you, it is not my Design in the least to load you with Difficulties, the Aversion I have contracted against PRIESTS and their Revelations being, I must own, chiefly owing to the HARD RULES of Duty they lay down of this kind; and therefore, as it was my first Purpose to have nothing in common with them, the great Principle by which I would have you act in this Matter, will be so easy and plain, that I cannot but be very sure it can give Distaste to none but PRIESTS, and those who are biggotted to their Pretences of Revelation. To quit you then at once of the Trouble of turning over the TOMES of the Learned, and purplexing your self with any of their Subtilties, the Religion I propose will carry you no further than your self, for every Rule of your Duty. *Your Will is only to be your Rule.*

It will be easily observ'd how much I study Plainness and Perspicuity in every Thing I propose. There have been some, and those too not inconsiderable of my
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Cotemporaries, who have given this my short and PLAIN PRINCIPLE of RELIGION abundance of different Names; as for Instance, some have call'd it REASON, others FREE-THINKING, others LIGHT-WITHIN, others CONSCIENCE; our most Modern PERSUASION, SINCERITY, &c. But as amidst all this vast Variety *in terminis*, no more is meant than what is contain'd in this honest, single Syllable which I have chose, (*viz.* the WILL) I shall not trouble you further in their Enumeration.

You will remember then, (for in the Business of a FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE, as this is, you ought always to have it in your Mind) That your WILL alone is the sole Rule by which you are to go; and tho' some of the other Words that may have been made use of on this Occasion, may not be amiss, yet above all, you must be sure never to call it your CONSCIENCE; because it seems to take in the UNDERSTANDING as well as the WILL, which I must once for all inform you, will never agree with the RELIGION I propose to set up. Upon the same Reason also, you must never for the future call it FREETHINKING, REASON, &c. As for PERSUASION, SINCERITY, and such other more Modern Phrases, I am not so averse to, because no Man to be sure can

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be PERSUADED to do a Thing, but he is of Consequence WILLING to do it : And if by Sincerity, be only meant being in Earnest, it may very well comport with being as we say resolv'd, or I will do so; and so comes under our General Principle of making our WILLS the only Rule or Standard of our Duty.

I have taken the more Pains to fix and explain this GREAT and FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE, and to place it rather in the WILL than the UNDERSTANDING, because as 'tis, and will be the great Basis on which our whole System must be framed; so it will ease us of abundance of troublesome Disputes and Controversies, to which it must have been necessarily subjected, had it been plac'd in the UNDERSTANDING. For as it has ever yet been found in Experience in the Case of the PRIESTS and their Scheme, that the Appeal to the UNDERSTANDING, to which all their several Pretensions recur, has created that continual and eternal Wrangle among them, as all their Application cannot put an end to; so it will be found much easier in the nature of the thing, to come to a Resolution, with regard to the WILL, than the UNDERSTANDING; as it is much easier to know what I am WILLING should be, than Philosophically to determine,

mine, or UNDERSTAND what really is. The first admits of no such thing as Scepticism, every Man being certain of the Conclusion of his own WILL; but in the Case of the UNDERSTANDING, there cannot sure be pretended an equal Certainty. 'Tis not therefore only because this Principle is NEW, and consequently is upon that Account better fitted to our present Design, but as from the Nature of it, it is suited thereto, and will answer every possible End we can propose in its Application.

Having by this Time fully explain'd and inforc'd the Nature of the GRAND PRINCIPLE in which we are to go, it will not improperly yet further illustrate my Meaning, if I here take the Liberty to alter what I have found by my self said on this Subject, when my Thoughts of it were really the same as now, tho' not so clearly express'd. Thus when I formerly (as I have before mention'd to you) avowedly exploded every such Thing as is called REVELATION, I call'd it the ORACLES of REASON: I desire for the future, that I may be better understood, that it may be called the ORACLES of the WILL; that being a Title better suited to the SINCERITY and Plainness with which I am resolv'd to proceed.

Tho' I doubt not, from what has already pass'd, the judicious will readily see the Excellence and Utility of my Design; yet as it is not to be expected all can take in such large Prospects of Things, it cannot now be useless to lay before you, not only the many Negative, but Positive Advantages that may immediately flow from a due and proper Application of the GREAT and FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLES here laid down.

Immediately then upon this Principle's taking place, you are sure to be rid of PRIESTS and PRIESTCRAFT, and consequently then there will be no occasion for CHURCH-LANDS and CHURCH-PLATE; and what Uses they may be then apply'd to, a Hint only will sufficiently inform you. You will have no SAWCY CREED, nor DECALOGUES to disturb and perplex the Calm and Serenity of your Mind; nor in short none of those formidable Spectres and Bugbears, which haunt you even in your Closets, and set up what the PRIESTS call *the Hand-writing against the Wall*; and make you restless even on Beds of Down. None of these Things will ever any more molest you, and every Thing else that us'd to fright and amuse you, in the methods of
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all other Superstitions, will at once be banish'd out of your Thoughts.

Take it in its Positive Advantages, and you are sure to have a RELIGION you like ; for your WILL only being the Rule of your Choice, you are sure to have nothing that will grate upon, or distaste you, He that has it in his Power to choose what he will, must blame himself if he is not pleas'd. Your Religion you see lies in the least Room you can imagine ; 'tis contain'd in a Monosyllable, and the whole of it is comprehended in this short Comment ; *You may BELIEVE, and DO as you WILL.*

Nor will it more recommend it self, on the Account of the easiness and conciseness of the Precepts, than it will in the extensiveness of its Subject ; what the PRIESTS call their CATHOLICK-CHURCH will appear on the least Attendance an empty Name, and 'tis I only have produc'd the Thing. For let it be consider'd, can the Wit of Man conceive a more CATHOLICK PRINCIPLE, or what will every where be Universally received than this ? You may do what you will ! Who is there that will quarrel with you in this Case ? if in the Application of it, it be allow'd to be unlimited and unconfin'd. To illustrate this in particulars, for Illustrations argue ; Do
you

you believe there is no God? so you may if you WILL. Do you believe all the RELIGIONS at present in the World, to be only Trick and Imposture? so you may. Turn it in another View; Do you believe *Mahomet* to be as true a Prophet as Christ? *Fox* and *Muggleton* as *Moses*? and so on, *ad infinitum*. The only Answer that will be exacted of you is this, that you be SINCERELY PERSUADED, or in other Words, WILLING: That so, and so it should be, and then all Doubt about it immediately vanishes. And now tell me freely, is not this a most CATHOLICK PRINCIPLE, and what, look the World round, Men will be naturally led to agree to?

Nor will, upon the least Reflection, the TEMPER and MODERATION contain'd in this Principle, appear less manifest, as it condemns none. For if my Will, MY WILL I say (for I lay it down as a fundamental Principle, that this shall be the Privilege and Badge of Church Communion, or Church Membership, or call it what you will) is the only Rule, then all Contention must of Necessity cease, and Dispute be at an End; when I can SINCERELY say so, I am WILLING, or will it should be so.

You

You see by this what care I take to prevent SCHISMS and Divisions among the Members of this my new Corporation ; and this will be yet further apparent to you, when I am to inform you, that there shall be no such Things as *Penal Laws* to enforce my particular Determinations of the WILL this way, but all shall be free and unconstrain'd ; nor no HUMAN ENGINES contriv'd by Power to controul the utmost Liberty and Freedom that human Nature can imagin. Tho' this by the Intelligent would have been easily seen to be the Consequence of what I have said before : Yet I thought the more particularly to mention it to take of all Apprehensions of what the PRIESTS and their Votaries call PENAL LAWS and TESTS : Besides, it will not be without its use, if well regarded, to our own Scheme it self, and serve for a Principle of UNITY and Church Communion. For as Union (as I have often before upon other Occasions in this Argument inculcated) in Religion does not consist, as the PRIESTS falsely contend, in an Agreement of the CREED or Belief, and PRACTICE of the same Things; but MUTUAL LOVE, FORBEARANCE, and TEMPER, in not censuring and condemning others that differ from us ; and as it must be acknowledg'd true in the Experience of human Nature, that

that tho' every Man is very fond of having his own WILL in every particular of this kind himself; yet he is not so readily inclin'd others should have the same liberty; and therefore to prevent all difference and Animosity this way, it is not only positively injoin'd by me, but necessary in the Nature and Reason of the Thing, that this Liberty should be common, and enjoy'd by all without exception, and not any Lett or Molestation given thereto.

By this you find the Principle here laid down is an UNITING as well as a CATHOLICK PRINCIPLE; and will hinder Mens Quarrelling and differing from one another, which as the PRIESTS have never yet been able to effect, abundantly shows the excellency of what is here propos'd, beyond what they could ever yet pretend to.

Are you then desirous of either LIBERTY or PEACE in our Religion? Here you have them both provided for in the utmost Latitude. You are so far from being pin'd down to the Dogmatick Rules and Prescriptions of the PRIESTS and their REVELATION in the first, that you are to take nothing of that kind from any Man, nay it is a Breach of your very FUNDAMENTAL PRINCIPLE of
LIBERTY

LIBERTY, the making only your own WILL the RULE for him to pretend to offer any Thing that way, and must and ought to be refented by you as fuch; and as for the Second, your PEACE, fhould any difturbance be given you that way, by what the PRIESTS call *Contending for the Faith*, you are immediately to Answer, every Thing of that kind exceeds its proper Bounds, when it offers it felf to another, the utmoft extent of it only reaching to the Determination of him, and him only, who is PERSUADED or PLEASED, or which at laft is the beft Word, WILLETH fo or fo: 'Tis therefore but keeping clofe to your Principle, and you are fure both of Liberty and Peace, and 'tis nothing but the breaking in upon the one, can give either of the other the leaft Difturbance.

But as wide and diffufive as this our Rule may appear to be, I am now to obferve it is not to be fo unlimited and unconfin'd as to be determinative in every, but only the PRESENT TENSE: As to the *Preter* or *Future*, they are always to be fubject thereto; fo that tho' fo or fo fhould be my will to Day, I am not thereby oblig'd to will the fame to MORROW; or fuch and fuch was my will YESTERDAY, therefore it muft be the fame to DAY: For this would be to abridge the Determinations of the Will,

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and consequently the Liberty of it, when it shall see proper Occasion to vary. All therefore as is necessary to us in every possible Case, is only to determine our present Will in the Point before us, without any manner of regard to what has been, or may be our Will hereafter.

Tho' this is a Distinction that may seem at first View to represent the Rule we have laid down Precarious, and in many Instances inconsistent and irreconcilable with it self: Yet when it is consider'd the Necessity and Emergency of Things must, and often will render a Change necessary, it must render it equally necessary to determine it only to the present Tense, in order to give such necessary Liberty for Alteration, and consequently such a Limitation or Restriction put upon the Rule, is not in the least a Cramping or Abridging its Liberty, but giving it it's full scope, and preserving it always at Harmony with it self.

The Nature and Advantages of the Rule laid down with the single Restriction it is subject to, with respect to Time, being sufficiently explain'd, let us in the next Place consider what Name we shall give, or how we shall distinguish it this way from all other Churches and Religions at present in
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being in the World : It being in every Part so abundantly distinguish'd from either the *Jewish, Christian, Mahometan, or Pagan Religions*, it cannot at least, be equally proper to distinguish it in the Denomination or Name by which it shall be called ; and therefore I have thought and determin'd to call it a CATHOLICK PROTESTANT CHURCH. A *Catholick Church* because of its Rule being so *Universal* and extensive, as to take in all Mankind : And a *Protestant Church* because it protests against, and condemns all other Churches but it self.

The Rule and Name of our present propos'd Church and Religion thus fixed upon, we are led next by a very easy Transition of Thought to consider who shall be the Members of this our NEW CHURCH and NEW RELIGION ; for let the Scheme be never so well perfected otherways, it must be allow'd a good and large Congregation is a Constitutive Ingredient, and without it our whole Project must prove vain and abortive.

And for this as we have before observ'd, our Church is calculated for the whole World, but as GREAT BRITAIN is the Place on which we shall bestow the Favour of it's Beginnings, it may not be amiss a little to consider of such Persons as are fit for an early

ly Admission to Membership therein, and these we shall reduce to three Denominations, *viz.*

The ATHEIST,
The DEIST,
And the PERSUADIST.

And First, The ATHEIST.

And here it cannot be improper to observe the Extensive and CATHOLICK SPIRIT by which the Religion I propose is acted, as taking in more Members into its Communion, than any which has gone before it. The ATHEIST, I think it will be readily admitted, has been a Person that has hitherto been excommunicated from all Churches, and no Religions that ever I have yet heard of, have received him into their Communion: but in that which I propose to set up, he seems not only to have as good, but a better TITLE than any other. No Man to be sure uses his WILL more, and his UNDERSTANDING less, in the Choice of his CREED than He; and consequently none fitter for Church Membership in that Religion, where the *Will* and not the *Understanding* is alone made the Rule of Duty. But such is the Nature and Constitution of the Religion, or Church I propose to set up; *Ergo* an ATHEIST

is a very fit and proper Person to be a Member thereof.

And thus I think I have very Logically prov'd the proper Title of the ATHEIST to Church Membership. The next we propos'd to examine into his Title, was the DEIST.

As for these Gentlemen, tho' I must allow them to be a very valuable Body, yet I must be so free with them, as to acquaint them, they must be under some little Regulation, before I can any ways admit them into my Church, or Communion. What I mean I have before taken occasion to mention; and that is the Pretence of being determin'd only by REASON: This, as it sets up the UNDERSTANDING, and not the Will, for the Rule of Duty, will be readily perceiv'd to clash with our Fundamental Principle, which must upon no Account be receded from: And therefore, for the future they must alter their Language, and not say Thus, or Thus says *my Reason*, but Thus *my Will* determines. Nor must this be thought at all stiff and untractable; for the only Rule our Religion is subject to, being so very short and easy, it must be insisted on, that that shall be kept up to; and therefore I cannot but promise my self for the future, all mention of the Word REASON will cease among
these

these worthy Gentlemen, and that they will so far conform to the rest of their Brethren, as to make use of the Word WILL, instead thereof.

The ATHEIST and the DEIST, being as I think fully fix'd in our Communion, I am now led to look into the Pretensions of the last of our propos'd Candidates, which you will remember we call'd PERSUADISTS.

I am sensible I shall be quarrell'd with here, by the empty whiffling Criticks, that I have here made a new Word ; but as the Dignity of my Character is alone a sufficient Reason for such a Liberty, that might silence them : However, in Condescension to others who may be tempted to enquire what I mean by it, for them the following Explanation is given. By a PERSUADIST then I mean, all such who are determin'd only by what they have of late chose to call their PERSUASION, which as it will very well comport with what I have chose more properly to call the WILL, comes under the Rule we have fix'd ; and consequently qualifies them for our Church Membership. Nor am I indeed very averse to the Word it self ; it admitting of so handsome a Latitude. For, tho' no doubt from this Word, some will take the Liberty to say they are per-

persuaded to be a *Turk*, a *Jew*, an *Infidel*, &c. Others a *Quaker*, *Muggletonian*, *Freethinker*, or whatever other Denomination which the PRIESTS call *Schism*, *Hereſy*, *Infidelity*, and their other Scare-crow Words; yet, as they really in Fact mean by it only ſo, or ſo we will be, their Title to Church Membership is not in the leaſt to be diſputed; and tho' we would rather bring Matters to a UNIFORMITY of WORDS, as well as MEANINGS, yet as that is not immediately to be effected, I think it may not be amiſs to allow at preſent of ſome Indulgence of that kind. However, I cannot but recommend to you the ſooner we come to UNIFORMITY this way, the better; eſpecially, leaſt our Adverſaries ſhould by this means take occaſion to diſtract and confound us among our ſelves.

Well, having by this Time, as I think, abundantly fitted up both your CHURCH and CONGREGATION, which I doubt not you are ſufficiently ſatisfy'd will be very great and extenſive: Leaving now your RELIGION, let us proceed to examine your POLITICAL Capacity, which was the Second View we propos'd to take of this our new System.

And

And in this I promise to be all of a Piece with your Religion. So that as neither the PRIESTS, nor their CRAFT, have any thing to do with the one, they shall be equally excluded all Share in the other: The Account which *Moses* and his Train of PRIESTS since him, have given of the Original and Foundation of Government and Magistracy, shall here be equally exploded, with that they give in other Matters; and particularly all Mankind's coming from the *Loins of one*, and consequently from their very first Creation and Production, born in a State of Subjection and Subordination one to another; more immediately mark'd out as absurd and incredible, and the more rational Account of this Matter, *viz. That all Mankind sprung like Mushrooms, out of the Earth in a Night*, and were therefore produc'd at first in a perfect State of EQUALITY, and whenever they appear'd to be otherwise, it was all the effect of Pact and Agreement, set up in its stead.

Thus much being premis'd, I shall proceed to state the difference of your Polity and Government, from that which the PRIESTS and their CRAFT have every where set up, in these two distinct Views. *Viz.*

First,

First, In its Original and Foundation;

And

Secondly, In the Sanctions that belong thereto.

And as to it's Original, &c.

This you may be very sure was not as the PRIESTS tell you *from God*, but the PEOPLE. You have I doubt not, observ'd before me already; the *Belief of a God*, is no necessary Article of the Religion I have set up: But which side of the Question soever you are willing should be true, (for you will remember it turns on that) *viz.* whether there be, or be not a God? Here you may be very certain he never interposes in any Thing that relates to Magistrates; and tho' the PRIESTS tell us that he *sets up one and pulls down another*, and that there is *No Power* of this kind but of him: Yet nothing can be more evident than that every Thing of this Nature, as it came at first from the Aggregated Body of the People, still remains wholly in their will and pleasure, and is to be alter'd and modify'd as they think fit.

Tho' the Advantages of this Scheme will be readily seen by the Judicious: Yet as it has been my Method of Condescension to make every Member of my Body Politick sensible thereof; my next Business is to pre-

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sent

First,

sent some of them to their more immediate Apprehension. As by this means then they are sure to be rid of every Thing the PRIESTS and their CRAFT have hitherto propos'd of this kind : So they are equally sure by them to have no other sort of Oeconomy, than what they shall choole themselves, and consequently as they will have nothing in their Religion but what they shall WILL or please : so neither shall they have any thing in their Government but what they shall themselves make CHOICE of. I need not, I think, tell how much by this the SPIRIT OF LIBERTY will obtain, the very mention of what has pass'd sufficiently suggesting it. No Man to be sure can think himself abridg'd, who has his own Choice, and that being the very essential and constitutive Principle upon which we are to be acted; nothing can more amply provide for every Thing we can wish of that kind.

Besides, as this Principle levels all Mankind to an exact Par and Equality, and makes us (as I have upon other Occasions of the like Nature observ'd) *all Born to the same Rights and Priviledges* : It must consequently give every Body at least some Chance for a considerable share in the Administration; which as it cherishes those hopes which no other Scheme yet in being can ever give

Birth

Birth to, must upon that Account be a mighty Encouragement for every Body to joyn in with it. But least while it is only my Intent to encourage your hopes, I should raise your Presumption: I cannot but take Occasion to observe to you by way of Prevention of mistake that might possibly take place, that tho' with regard to your Politicks as well as your Religion, every Man is to have his own WILL or CHOICE, and the particular manner or Modification of either of these, is to be determin'd wholly by what we shall WILL or Choose: Yet in the latter Case this Rule or Principle is not so entirely to be determin'd by INDIVIDUALS, as in the former; my meaning is, That tho' every Man singly consider'd, has by Virtue of this Principle a Liberty of Believing, or being of what Religion he will, yet this Principle shall not be so extended, as that he so singly consider'd, shall only submit to, and be ruled by what Government he will: And the Reason of this is plain, for tho' Religion (which is a matter of Speculation only, and so of no Consequence whether we are right or wrong in it) may be diversify'd and vary'd just as every Man shall think fit; and if there be a God, (as I have before observ'd) he HAS NO FAVOURITE OPINION *, and consequently nothing of that kind is worth our Contest:

* See the last Paper of the Independent Whigg.

Yet in Government or Politicks the Case cannot be so; because if nothing of this kind can be fix'd or settled, till every Individual shall Will or Agree to it, there never will be any Settlement: And so our great and noble Scheme will be without a Body Politick.

I am very well appriz'd the Superficial, upon my Stating this Difficulty, will immediately conclude me brought to this Dilemma, viz. That either the Principle I have laid down in Politicks, *That we shall have only such a Government or Magistracy, as we shall Will or Chuse*, must fail, or else we can by it have *No such Thing as Government or Magistracy* at all,

But in Answer to this, I can assure them it is my full purpose to part with neither of them, I mean the Principle, nor the Government; for as I design my self a considerable Part in the one, so I dont doubt but I shall be thought worthy of it, upon my having invented, and so clearly propos'd the other. I proceed therefore next to the Clearing of the Difficulty, and proving their Consistency with each other.

And this will very readily appear by the Distinction I have already at least suggested, between the Determination of the Will in Religion and Politicks; in the one it is applicable

plicable to every individual, in the other it is not : And least this should be thought a *Salvo* only to skin over the present sore, and not thought of at my first setting out : I am to remind you that when I told you Government was only to be resolv'd into the Will and Choice of the People, I spoke of the People not as Individuals, but as aggregated, and so consequently to be consider'd as Collectively ; and under this View I still insist their will and Choice is to give it being, under what Form or Modifications they shall think proper.

Having thus settl'd and fix'd the Fountain and Original of your Politicks, and clear'd it from some Difficulties that might seem to lye in your way, I proceed to consider them in what I propos'd should be the second view, in which they were to be placed, *viz.* The Sanctions which are annex'd to them.

And I can promise you these shall be nothing of the same kind that the PRIESTS pretend to : Their empty Terrors of another World and bigg mouth'd Word Damnation, shall have no Place in our whole Scheme of Politicks : So that if you manage your selves so as to escape being hang'd, you are discharg'd at once from all fear of being damn'd.

Their

Their Accounts of *Rebellion* being as the *Sin of Witchcraft*, with all the blustering Chicanes they use of that kind, you are allow'd to sneer and laugh at; and this single Reason is sufficient to silence all they have to offer of that Nature; that they are only the imaginary Bugbears of PRIESTCRAFT, and therefore at once to be exploded and made the Jest of Mankind.

And this, upon a very little Reflection, will let you into the MEASURES of your SUBMISSION, which being by this means transfer'd from what they call CONSCIENCE to WRATH, or, the Fear of present Punishment, you will consequently have need of no other Motive or Rule for your Actions in every POSSIBLE CASE, but what may be reduc'd to these two Heads.

First, Your Ease; and

Secondly, Your Ambition.

Both of these you will find not only essential to the Constitution it self, but also you will easily observe them abundantly expressive of that SPIRIT OF LIBERTY in its utmost Latitude, which will run thro' the whole.

First,

First, Then as it relates to your Ease.

And this you will readily perceive will guard you against any Attempts of Alteration, or making Revolutions in Government; where you are not sure you have sufficient Numbers and Strength to effect them : For tho' as I before observ'd, you are quitted from all fear of being Damn'd upon this Account, yet this can never be made a Reason, that you should not take Care you are not hang'd. In order therefore to your Security, you must always be sure to make Choice of the strongest side, and if ever you do miscarry, go however to the Gallows with this Satisfaction, that you had at least three to one odds.

As it is impossible amidst the Vicissitudes of Human Life, to lay down any certain and never failing Maxims of Ease and Security, yet I cannot but think what I have here offer'd may go as far that Way, as any that have as yet been propos'd to the World.

Nor will it appear of less Use in the forming what you are to call your Legislative Power, than to your own private Ease and Security. For whatever the damn'd Civilians, or Writers in Law and Equity
(who

(who are at bottom no other than the Spawn of the PRIESTS) may suggest to the contrary, nothing can in Nature be so emphatically LAW, as that which results from the WILL of the Majority; consequently, the great and fundamental Principle we have so often inculcated, of the WILL, being the only Rule of Duty, appears in its Application, adequate and decisive, both in Church and State.

You see as I would have you all breathe a SPIRIT of LIBERTY, I would also have you do it with EASE and SECURITY, and therefore it was I plac'd your Ease as a proper Spring of your Actions, before your Ambition, which you are only to attend to in the Second Place: And 'tis I must own the greatest Difficulty has occur'd to me in my whole Scheme, to make these two comport and agree with each other; Ease being in its Nature, such an indolent, idle, Ambition; such a restless, active Principle, that they seem like Fire and Water, declared Enemies, and Contradictions in Nature. But however, that we may provide in some measure for the Gratification of both these as far as possible we can, and indeed as our Scheme it self would not be compleat without some such Provision were made, we

we shall pursue the Order of our Discourse, and see what can be done of that kind.

By your AMBITION then I am to inform you in the first Place, you are not to understand barely the desire of GLORY in so abstracted a Sense, as to exclude that of RICHES. For as the Scheme of Politicks I would propose to you, is not without its Dignities, neither is it well to be carried on without Money. Nor have we found in the most eminent Instances, the Love of Glory, and the Love of Money, Things so hard to be join'd together, but that they have often been united together in the same Person. The PRIESTS indeed have told us in their CRAFT, of *Men-fearing God, and hating Covetousness*, but as 'tis the whole of our Design to quit you from the FEAR of the one, there consequently can be no Necessity for HATRED of the other. Nay, so far is it from it, that there seems to me a sort of necessary concomitancy to take Place in this Case : So that he that desires to be GREAT in our present Scheme of Politicks, must, by a kind of Order in Nature, first be RICH.

And this I have the rather mention'd, to give Encouragement to the cunning contriving, as well as the blustering fighting Fellow,

low, least it should be thought by my mentioning the Word Ambition, the main Advantages of my Design were only intended for them. No, I'll assure you, as I myself never yet wore a red Coat in my Life: So, it is not in my Thoughts to give up the considerable Share I expect to have in the Administration, only to those whose whole Notion of Politicks turns on the Methods of forming a Camp.

This I mention not only to show the whole Scheme will be carry'd on without any partial Regards; but as by this means the two great Springs of our Actions, our Ease and Ambition might be made better to Comport and Harmonize with each other: For as the same Ends of Ambition and Covetousness may be pursued, and indeed often are with more Success, by the Methods of Cunning and Contrivance, than by open Violence and boldly daring Attempts: So in these Methods we are undoubtedly more secure of our Ease and Tranquillity in their Acquirements: And as both your Ease and Ambition are to be the Motives of your Actions; this way may not improperly be used for their Mutual and joynt Gratification.

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I need not I think, tell you how many fine Things may be Compris'd in these two Words, EASE and AMBITION; nothing being more certain, than that by their Gratification, every thing we can almost desire in Life, may be included. He was a merry Fellow, whatever the Priests may say to the contrary, who laid down that Maxim, *let us Eat and Drink, for to morrow we dye*: For, when it is consider'd that Dye we must, and then as one of our brave Fellows formerly has told us, these *Spirits* (as the Priests call them) of ours, will *melt into soft Air*; and that the best of us find little Distinction in the Dust: Surely a Man would make the most of his Time, and lay out Life to as many merry Purposes as he can. Now the Gratification of our Ease and Ambition taking in all we can think of, of that kind, I have therefore chose thus to affix them as the great Rules and Principles, by which we are to be mov'd.

They that shall think by my only mentioning EASE and AMBITION, I have not made any Provision for their PLEASURE, have not consider'd the Latitude in which these two Words are to be taken; for as our Ease will very naturally lead us to the desire of our Coach, and our Ambition will very rea-

dily advance that Desire to our Coach and Six, with all the Circling Splendours belonging thereto: So it is very easy from hence to infer, nothing under such Circumstances can be suppos'd to be deny'd to our Pleasures, place them in what Scenes of Delight we will; and this the very Reason and Nature of the Thing abundantly speaks of it self, because we can never be supposed throughly at Ease, while we have in us a restless Desire after any Thing, with which we cannot be gratify'd.

Having thus as I think, laid before you the whole of my present Scheme, both as it relates to Religion, and Politicks, and shewn you the great Rule to which they are subject, with the several Advantages that flow therefrom, it may not be amiss to take such a Retrospective View thereof as may convey the Idea of it in the most narrow, and consequently most intelligible compass into our Minds. You will remember then the only Rule, to which your Religion and Politicks are subject, being your WILL, only with this Distinction, in regard to the Later, by your WILL you are to understand the WILL of the Majority; every Thing therefore that Clashes with that, must consequently be rejected by you, and opposed with Might and Main: But be-
cause

cause something of this kind must be expected, beyond what I have already mention'd to you; least our Great and Fundamental Rule should be tumbl'd down for want of having proper Skill to defend it, I have thought it convenient in this Concluding Part of my Discourse, to lay something of this kind before you, not only the more fully to give it a clear and irresistible Con-
tutation; but to anticipate the Difficulty it might otherwise give you, were you not thus forearm'd against it.

It will then probably be argu'd, not only by PRIESTS, but some others who value themselves on their Metaphysicks, That upon Supposition of what I have here laid down taking Place and being received as the Rule and Standard of all our Actions, both Religious and Civil, *viz. The Will only is the Rule of Duty*: Not only every such Thing as is call'd Divine Revelation must cease, but every such Thing as Positive and standing Law and Moral Rectitude, with the Eternal Distinctions of Good and Evil.

And to all this Pomp of Expression, my Answer is very short, *viz.* This is very true; and not only so, but every Consequence generally urged of this kind, against this my Great and Fundamental Principle, is
readily

readily admitted: And this notwithstanding is so far from frightening me from the thorough Prosecution thereof in all its Branches, That I take my Encouragement from the Opposition I find made to me of this kind: For whatsoever the Prejudice of Education and the several Superstitions which have in so great a Degree obtained in the World, and which it is my profess'd Design to abolish and destroy, may suggest to the contrary: there neither is, nor can be any Thing more indubitably certain than this, That what we call Virtue and Vice, Good and Evil, are not Things distinct in their own Nature, but perfectly Arbitrary and Determin'd wholly by the Conclusions of the Will; and this appears by this Demonstration, take away the Will which gives Birth to any Action, and that Action is Therefore, and only Therefore irregular and unjustifiable; add to it the Concurrence of the Will, and then it Commences both regular and Justifiable: So that you see the Nature of an Action is to be here determin'd, not from any Moral Turpitude suppos'd to be contain'd in the Action it self; for this only could result from positive Law, which must be fix'd and certain, but from the Will of the Agent, which according to the different Exigencies and Appearance of Things determines or concludes So
or

or So : And from hence, and only from hence, are to be fetch'd the Distinctions of Right and Wrong, Good and Bad.

The Consequence that immediately here-upon takes Place, that the Distinctions of Good and Evil must by this means be, if not totally destroy'd, render'd at least exceeding variable and Precarious, is 'so far from being deny'd, that I look upon it as one of the Perfections necessarily resulting from the great and Fundamental Principle I have laid down, that so it must and so should be ; and in nothing does this more readily appear than in the SPIRIT of LIBERTY contain'd herein, which is so far from being abridg'd and dictated to, by any imperious and imaginary Laws of others, that it is not without the utmost Latitude of Power, of Changing and Altering those that shall be made by themselves.

Having by this means quitted you from the Apprehensions of the Idle and imaginary Distinctions of Good and Evil, and determin'd the Notion and Modification of them to what you will your selves : I am lead in the next Place to observe to you it may possibly be objected, That tho' this Principle may be made to comport well enough in Religion, which is to be determin'd

min'd only to Individuals, and a Man is not in that to be accountable to any Body but himself: Yet it cannot so well be thought to run smooth, and without considerable rubbs and Interruptions in Civil Life. For my Will (it may be argu'd) being my only Rule, should that incline me by Violence and what is call'd Robbery, to take another Man's Money or Goods, or lye with his Wife or Daughter, &c. It is Ten to one but his Will will equally encline him to send me to the Gallows, or knock me o'th' Head; now the Question immediately arises what must be done in Case of such opposite and different Wills, and how the SPIRIT of LIBERTY I so much boast of, can be preserv'd in both?

But however intricate this may appear at first sight, the Answer to it is very easy: For tho' the Nature and Consequence of each of these different Wills cannot be determin'd (as I own by the Principle I have so much inculcated) by any such Thing as positive Law: Yet may they by some other Rules of Action it may be remember'd, I have laid down in this Discourse; and those where you will call to mind your Ease and Ambition. You will naturally gather, the First of these can never find its Gratification, where we have not Strength to Effect what we

we Will, or Desire, consequently the very End we propose such, or such an enjoyment ceases where there is not Power sufficient to attain it. In all such Cases therefore, we are to consider, That tho' we are not at all abridg'd in our Desires, by any Thing like what may be called Law, or Moral Rectitude: Yet ought we to be so by our own Ease, or if you will, the Fear of Punishment. For let our Wills never so strongly encline us to, and after another Man's Money or his Wife, &c. Yet it can never encline us to that which must and will be the Consequence of such a Will and Inclination, the being Hang'd, or knock'd o'th' Head, for attempting to put it in Execution.

Having got clear thus far, I am now to inform you, some of my private Friends, to whom I have communicated the whole of my Project, have told me I have wrong'd some very worthy Gentlemen of their Property, and such Gentlemen too as I my self have allow'd to have been considerably useful even to my present Design. The Persons here meant are some of the Clergy, who by my Stiff and Tenacious Adhesion to the Purpose of excluding all PRIESTS out of my Church, are by me deprived of all

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the Advantages of a Project, to which they had with more than common Labour and Study pay'd my Way.

To clear up this, tho' I must still stick fast to my first Resolution, of having not so much as the Name of a Priest in my New Church and Religion : Yet for the sake of those for whom this Representation is made, whose suggested Merits I must own my self in some measure sensible of; I am willing to admit them upon the Alteration of their Name, to some other which I shall hereafter think proper for them, & their immediately Stripping off their Gown and Cassock, which indeed ought to have been pull'd off long before : And after this, thorough Purgation from their whole Pollution, both in Name and Garments: I am farther willing for their Encouragement, they shall retain the same Revenues, they at present stand possess'd off, as long as they shall appear to be fully sensible of their former abominable Sin and Wickedness.

And this I agree to not only upon the Intercession that has been made for them, and the remarkable Merit some of them have of late display'd; but also to show the excellent Church and Religion I have here propos'd

pos'd to the World, is not without the Power of Absolution, and receiving Penitents. For however, this may have been represented as a TRIFLE by some: Yet it cannot but have been observ'd in the Case of all other Rebellions, how much AMNESTY and OBLIVION, has contributed to the putting an End to publick Opposition and Disorder; and therefore it cannot be improper in the present Case, to make some such Provision as may not drive even the PREISTS themselves to Desperation, and convince them that our Quarrel with them, is not so entirely personal; but that upon parting both with their CRAFT and their FUNCTION, they may be receiv'd and entertain'd with the same Encouragements as other Men; and in this we will promise so far to differ from all other Systems of Politicks have hitherto appear'd, as not only to receive and encourage the Treason; but afterwards in some degree Reward even the Traytor himself.

And now after above Thirty Years Labour and Pains to bring my great and Important Project to bear; after the Difficulty of the Times thro' which I have pass'd; the many and various Shapes I have put on to this purpose; you have it at last

finish'd, and now propos'd and presented to you, open and plain, with the utmost Sincerity without any Daub, or Colouring to make it appear what it really is not. When you reflect on the several Beauties and Excellencies in all its Parts; how useful, how beneficial the Prosecution of it must prove to Mankind, none sure, but will joyn a Hand for its support and carrying on; and as I am fully perswaded what has been already said, has abundantly spoke its recommendation: So I shall not fill, or burden the Remaining Part of these Papers with any Thing more of that kind, but only to prevent Relapsing after such an ample Field of Liberty and Freedom from the Slavery Superstition, and Vassalage you have so long labour'd under, is set before you: Let me lay before you some Parts of the Speech of our Great Head and Leader, when he was exciting his Revolting Angels, to much such another Glorious Enterprize of Liberty and Freedom as we have here been inculcating, and laying before you, viz.

† Will

† *Will ye submit your Necks, and choose to bend,
The Supple Knee? ye will not, if I trust
To know you right, or if you know your selves
Natives and Sons of Heaven, possesst before
By none, and if not equal all, yet Free,
Equally Free; —————*

*Who can in Reason then, or right assume
Monarchy, over such as live by Right;
His equals, if in Power, and Splendor less,
In FREEDOM equal? or, can introduce
Law and Edict on us, who without Law,
Err not, much less for this to be our Lord,
And look for Adoration to th' Abuse
Of those imperial Titles which assert
Our being ordain'd to govern not to serve.*

I meddle not with the Fable of the Priests
the Poet here alludes to, the whole of my
Intent of laying the Passage before you, be-
ing to give you a lively Image of the Spirit
of LIBERTY and FREEDOM, by which you

† *Vide, Milton's Speech of Satan to excite to Rebellion.*
are

are to be acted, which, as I thought it to be here excellently well express'd, it tempted me thus fully to exhibit the whole of my Thoughts as 'twere in Epitomy in the preceeding Lines.

And now having as I think, sufficiently propos'd and settled the whole of my Scheme, I shall conclude all with a Word or two of Advice for the better carrying on, and preserving thereof to future Generations: And what I have to offer of this kind, shall at present be reduced to these two Particulars, *viz.*

First, with regard to your Management, or, Conduct towards the
PRIESTS; and
Secondly, towards their CRAFT.

And first of the PRIESTS, &c.

This you must keep up as a fix'd and standing Practice never to cease RAILING and declaiming against them; Every Thing that is the most Black and Villanous, must be continually laid to their Charge, and this you must so manage, as to make PRIESTS of all Religions to be the same. I must own it has been much practis'd, and that too, even by my self with very good
Success

Success, to distinguish them under the Names of POPISH and HIGH PRIESTS; but as the Time now is come for our Manifesting our SINCERITY, as well as Hatred this way, the utmost Openness and Plainness, must be used by us, and consequently such Artfull Distinctions, must cease for the Future.

They that cannot see the Necessity of this, do not consider how useful this is to keep up the Spirit and Aversion of the People against them, which being thoroughly effected, our Project stands establish'd of Course: The Difficulty of doing this is nothing, the meanest of our Members being abundantly qualify'd herein, and every little Ale-House may be made the Scene of their Exercises. No Story can be thought of this way so ridiculous and improbable, but what if it carry's the Parson of the Parish in it's Application, may be of Use; and in the Methods of Writing, what we call SPIRIT and GENIUS, is so far from being necessary, that the very Excrements of Writers, will do as well as the most labour'd and refin'd. In this Province, every Fool may have his full Scope and Licence, and 'tis not a Farthing Matter whether, he appear so much as to have Common Sense, so he does but manifest to the World he has more than Common Malice: But with regard to the
CRAFT,

CRAFT, more Care must be taken in the MANAGERS, which as it was the second Particular in which we propos'd to advise, we now proceed to it.

In order to the better exposing of this, I hold it highly requisite, That he that engages this Way, be considerably vers'd in, and have some Knowledge of it himself; to this End it will immediately be found necessary, That the Man who ventures to attack and Buffoon the the Parson from his Book, must at least, be as good a Textuarist as the Parson himself: For tho' I must allow, there is not any thing more dull and sleepy in Nature, than Scripture when it comes from the Doctor in the Pulpit: Yet I must equally declare, I have my self in the most repeated Experience, found more Picquancy and Life in some of my own ludicrous Turns of this kind, than in all my other most labour'd Strains of Wit and Oratory. I readily acknowledge I had the less Occasion to mention this to you, because it is grown of late, mightily into request, and seems in all Parts of Conversation, to make a main Part of Modern Politeness: However, as all who have a Genius herein might not so readily apprehend what considerable Parts they might be call'd to engage in, in our present Design, I thought it proper

per to give them this Hint of their approaching Advancement.

As from my very first Entrance into this Work, I resolv'd to propose nothing to you, should in the least abridge you in your Mirth, so I must in the next part of my Advice to you, recommend that in all your Rencounters with the PRIESTS and their CRAFT, you be sure to keep up the Laugh. Serioulness in the Religion I propose, will be direct APPOSTACY, and therefore, must always be flown as the Pestilence ; besides, I must farther observe to you to be GRAVE, would destroy the very End you propose this way, and at once, bring PRIESTS and their CRAFT again into Reputation ; no, no, take it from the Sage Conclusions of my Age, Experience and Studies, if you would get rid of PRIESTS and PRIESTCRAFT, you must not attempt to REASON, but LAUGH them out of the World.

And here it cannot be improper to put even LAUGHTER it self under some Regulation ; for as it is one of the Weakest Parts of the Argument between the PRIESTS and us we can possibly engage in, to beg them all for FOOLS : So I cannot but at this Time whisper it among Friends, that many Times by their Management of the Argument,

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even

even in our own merry Way, we are made to look DAMN'D SILLY, when we plum'd our selves with the vain Imagination of being mighty WITTY; I shall never be able my self, to errace the Scars of the Wounds I receiv'd this way from that TOAD, E-CHARD, when I was known to the World by the Name of HOBBS; and therefore as the Poet had it;

*Dear bought Experience told me what is true,
And Friendship bids me tell those Truths to you;*

And as I would convey the whole of this GLORIOUS PROIECT to Posterity, upon the same solid Foundations upon which I have begun it: I could not but point out to you, such Difficulties as I foresaw would fall in your Way, the better to Arm your Caution against them.

Upon the whole, tho' it may be thought I have not acted without some Regard to my own Emolument, yet all must readily acknowledge how much I have withal consulted your Good. The Pains and Study I have been at to fix and settle FIRST PRINCIPLES, has taken from me Room for INFERENCE and APPLICATION: I doubt not all my Ingenious and worthy Readers will do that Work for me; and therefore

to their leisure and future Application I leave it. As the different Sizes of Human Understanding has always subjected all other Essays to Dispute and Contradiction, this being only address'd to the WILL, must I flatter my self, be free from that Inconveniency: I know not whether my Personal Character in not being a Gentleman Born, may be made any Reflection; but if I suffer upon that or any other Account, 'tis no more than what Eminent Writers must always expect to bear. I have no more to add, but that here are just Sheets enough (as my Bookseller informs me) to make a Twelve Penny Composition, and so I bid you heartily Farewel.



F I N I S.

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